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## **KAMRA TAL-PERITI CALLS FOR FREEDOM SQUARE TO BE HANDED BACK TO THE PUBLIC ON WORLD ARCHITECTURE DAY**

The theme of this year's World Architecture Day, celebrated every first Monday of October across the world, is "Empowering the next generation to participate in urban design".

It is a day on which the Kamra tal-Periti calls on all citizens, and in particular policy makers, to reflect on the state of architecture on our islands.

The Kamra has always been vociferous about the importance of promoting high quality architecture to ensure a better quality of life for all. It most recently gave a concrete example of how to achieve such an aim, by publishing a proposal for an urban park in the heart of Msida to visually demonstrate to the public that this is indeed possible, and to challenge public authorities on outdated vision for our islands.

However, if there is one intervention in Malta's public space that symbolically embodies the disregard, verging on contempt, with which architecture and the work of architects is generally held, it is the blight around Freedom Square upon which the parliament building designed by Renzo Piano stands.

The fact that such ignominy is carried out at the behest of the highest democratic institution in the country, just underscores the dire state of architecture and the long road towards achieving the cultural sensibilities and basic educational standards necessary to

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truly begin to understand and address the issues surrounding quality of public space and general wellbeing.

Renzo Piano's Parliament Building and the surrounding urban space were designed to promote transparency of the democratic processes. The permanently installed barriers that are erected around this building completely reverse the design intent of the architect, and instead places a physical separation between the electors and the elected, a gap which the architectural and urban design sought to eradicate.

The irony of this situation is further compounded by the fact that the institution that is entrusted by the Constitution to enact the laws of the land, is brazenly breaching several provisions of the same laws its members have passed inside that very building.

We call upon all the responsible public institutions, starting of course from the Speaker of the House, but also the Planning Authority, Lands Authority, and Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation, among many others, to uphold their obligations in the law and return Freedom Square to the public to whom they ultimately should hold their allegiance.

**END**

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